Attorney Docket No. 2003P00991WOUS

CERTIFICATION OF ATTACHED ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF PCT APPLICATION:

PCT/EP2004/007392 BASED ON DE 103 34 793.3 Filed 07/30/2003

I hereby certify the English translation attached is a true and accurate copy of the referenced PCT/EP2004/007392 application.

Russell W. Warnock
January 10, 2006
Registration No. 32,860

DISHWASHER COMPRISING A HEAT TUBE

The invention relates to a dishwasher comprising a cleaning container.

It is known that a dishwasher has a washing method whose programme run consists of at least one partial programme step "pre-wash", a partial programme step "clean", at least one partial programme step "intermediate rinse", a partial programme step "clear rinse" and a partial program step "dry". To increase the cleaning effect, the rinsing liquid is heated before or during a partial programme step. The rinsing liquid is usually heated by means of electrical heaters. Various drying systems are known for drying objects to be washed in a dishwasher.

For example, the objects to be washed can be dried by own-heat drying if the rinsing liquid is heated in a partial programme step "clear rinse" and thus the objects to be washed which have undergone a hot clear rinse are dried by themselves by the self-heat of the objects to be washed which has thus built up during the drying process. In order to achieve this own-heat drying, the rinsing liquid is heated to a certain temperature in a heat exchanger in the "clear rinse" partial programme step and applied to the objects to be washed by means of spraying devices. As a result of the relatively high temperature of the rinsing liquid in the "clear rinse" partial programme step of usually 65°C to 75°C, it is achieved that a sufficiently large quantity of heat is transferred to the objects to be washed so that water adhering to said objects to be washed vaporises as a result of the heat stored in the objects to the washed.

In a further known drying device, a separate heat source, e.g. a hot air fan, is used to heat the moist air mixture

during the drying process so that the air in the washing container can absorb a larger quantity of moisture.

Dishwashers are known in which the moist air is vented outwards. This is disadvantageous since the surrounding kitchen furniture is damaged.

Thus, other dishwashers are known in which the moist air is passed over condensing surfaces on which the moisture condenses before being guided out. This condensation is either passed into the washing container or into special collecting containers.

A dishwasher is known from DE 27 16 686 A1 wherein a heat tube protrudes in the washing container and forms a cooling surface there. The heat given off by the hot moist air is transported outwards by means of the heat tube. In order that the heat tube does not also remove heat during the partial programme steps in which heating is desired in the washing container, in these partial programme steps the heat tube is filled with an inert gas which prevents the heat tube from functioning.

A disadvantage in the heating systems described above according to the prior art described further above is that the heating of the rinsing liquid is associated with a high energy requirement and the thermal energy required for each heating phase must be produced anew by means of electrical heating elements. The known heating systems also have the disadvantage that the heating of the rinsing liquid in the "clear rinse" partial programme step and the processes in the "drying" partial programme step are themselves associated with a high energy requirement and the thermal energy required is lost after the drying process.

It is thus the object of the present invention to provide a dishwasher which can be used to efficiently clean and dry objects to be washed in a washing container and to keep the associated energy expenditure as low as possible.

This object is solved by the dishwasher according to the invention having the features according to claim 1. Advantageous further developments of the present invention are characterised in the dependent claims.

The dishwasher according to the invention comprising a washing container has a conduit system connected in an air-conveying manner to the washing container into which both ends of at least one heat tube protrude, said heat tube being used for cooling and therefore for drying on the one hand and for heating air passed through from the washing container on the other hand.

As a result of using a heat tube, the objects to be treated only require substantially less heating compared with the prior art, e.g. in dishwashers in the "clear rinse" partial programme step. This means a substantial saving of energy. The cooling of the air lowers its moisture absorption capacity and the moisture fraction of the air is precipitated as condensate. As a result of the heating of the air, it moisture absorption capacity is increased again on each passage through the conduit system which leads to an improvement in the drying result and/or shortening of the drying time. In the closed air system any exchange of contaminated air from the surroundings is completely eliminated, preventing any back contamination of the items to be treated. The present invention provides a dishwasher which can be used to efficiently clean and dry objects to be washed in a washing container and to keep the associated energy expenditure as low as possible.

According to a preferred feature of the invention, in the at least one "drying" partial programme step air from the washing container is passed into the conduit system and back into the washing container, whereby the aforesaid advantages are used as prescribed in the dishwasher according to the invention.

In an especially advantageous fashion, the washing container has an outlet with a pipe to one end of the heat tube, a pipe from one end of the heat tube to the other end of the heat tube and an inlet with a pipe from the other end of the heat tube, a fan being arranged in the pipe to one end of the heat tube which supplies at least some of the air in the washing container to the conduit system at least temporarily. In the closed air system any exchange of contaminated air from the surroundings is completely eliminated, preventing any back contamination of the items to be treated. The fan can easily be controlled so that the use of the heat tube can be precisely and more simply controlled, for example, compared with the dishwasher described in DE 27 16 686 A1. In addition, the fan intensifies the action of the heat tube since the air being passed through is conveyed more rapidly.

According to another preferred feature of the invention, the air is cooled by means of the heat tube. The actual function of the heat tube, cooling whilst removing the absorbed thermal energy, is thus used. The cooling of the air reduces its moisture absorption capacity and the moisture fraction of the air is precipitated as condensate.

According to another preferred feature of the invention, the air is heated by means of the heat tube. The further function of the otherwise present heat tube, the transported heat absorbed during cooling of the moist air and during

condensation of the moisture from the air, is used for further energy saving.

According to an advantageous embodiment of the invention, a heater is arranged in the conduit between the inlet and the other end of the heat tube. Should the heating of the air by the heat tube not be sufficient, the air is additionally heated by a heater to ensure the drying function. Despite the additional energy consumption for the heating, a saving of energy is achieved compared with the prior art described previously.

According to another advantageous embodiment of the invention, a condenser is arranged in the pipe between the outlet and one end of the heat tube or alternatively in the pipe between one end of the heat tube and the other end of the heat tube. Should the withdrawal of moisture from the air by the heat tube not be sufficient, the air is additionally passed by a condenser which undertakes the lacking removal of moisture to ensure the drying function.

The invention is explained in detail hereinafter with reference to exemplary embodiments of a dishwasher according to the invention shown in the drawings. In the figures:

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a dishwasher according to the invention with a perpendicularly arranged heat tube whose mode of action runs from top to bottom,

Fig. 2 is a schematic view of a dishwasher according to the invention with a perpendicularly arranged heat tube whose mode of action runs from bottom to top,

Fig. 3 is a schematic view of a dishwasher according to the invention with a horizontally arranged heat

tube wherein the air is circulated from top to bottom, and

Fig. 4 is a schematic view of a dishwasher according to the invention with a horizontally arranged heat tube wherein the air is circulated from bottom to top.

The figures show embodiments of the dishwasher 1, 1', 1", 1'" according to the invention comprising a washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" wherein crockery baskets not shown for placing items to be washed, which are not shown, are arranged. The same parts are labelled using the same reference numbers.

According to the invention, the dishwasher 1, 1', 1", 1'" comprises a conduit system 4, 4', 4", 4'" connected in an air-conveying manner to a washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" wherein both ends 11, 11', 11", 11'", 12, 12', 12", 12'" of at least one heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" protrude, said heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" being used, as is described in detail further below, on the one hand for cooling and thereby drying and on the other hand for heating air passed through from the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'".

The washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" has an outlet 3, 3', 3", 3'" which leads to the conduit system 4, 4', 4", 4'" comprising a pipe 5, 5', 5", 5'" to one end 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'", comprising a pipe 6, 6', 6", 6'" from one end 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to the other end 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" and comprising a pipe 7, 7', 7", 7'" from the other end 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to an inlet 8, 8', 8", 8'" of the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'", wherein located in the pipe 5, 5', 5", 5'" to one end 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube

10, 10', 10", 10'" is a fan 9, 9', 9", 9'" which supplies at least some of the air in the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" to the conduit system 4, 4', 4", 4'" at least temporarily.

In the closed air system any exchange of contaminated air from the surroundings is completely eliminated, preventing any back contamination of the items to be treated.

It is furthermore common to all the exemplary embodiment shown that a heater 15, 15', 15", 15'" is arranged in the pipe 7, 7', 7", 7'" from the other end 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to an inlet 8, 8', 8", 8'" of the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'". Should the heating of the air by the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" not be sufficient, the air is additionally heated by the heater 15, 15', 15", 15'" to ensure the drying function. Despite the additional energy consumption for the heater 15, 15', 15", 15'", a saving of energy is achieved compared with the prior art described previously.

It is furthermore common to all the exemplary embodiments shown that a condenser 16, 16', 16", 16'" is arranged in the pipe 6, 6', 6", 6'" from one end, the "cold side" 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to the other end, the "warm side" 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'". Alternatively it is also possible to have an arrangement of the condenser in the pipe to one end, to the "cold side" of the heat tube. Should the removal of moisture from the air by the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" not be sufficient, the air is additionally passed to the condenser 16, 16', 16", 16'" which undertakes the lacking removal of moisture to ensure the drying function. The condenser 16, 16', 16", 16'" is in thermal contact with the surroundings.

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram showing an embodiment of the dishwasher 1 according to the invention. This dishwasher 1 has a vertically arranged heat tube 10 whose mode of action runs from top to bottom. These heat tubes have an internal capillary structure which makes it possible for a filled working fluid not described in detail
to rise from the "warm side" 12 to the "cold side" 11 of the heat tube 10. Thus the pipe 5 to the "cold side" 11 of the heat tube 10 is located in the upper area of the washing container 2.

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram showing another embodiment of the dishwasher 1' according to the invention. This dishwasher 1' has a vertically arranged heat tube 10' but its mode of action runs from bottom to top in contrast to the exemplary embodiments shown in Fig. 1. No heat tube 10' with capillaries is required since the working fluid drops from the "warm side" 12 to the "cold side" 11 of the heat tube 10 as a result of gravity.

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram showing another embodiment of the dishwasher 1" according to the invention. In contrast to the two vertical heat tubes 10, 10' in Figures 1 and 2, the dishwasher 1" has a horizontally arranged heat tube 10". In this exemplary embodiment the air circulation runs from top to bottom. Thus the pipe 5" to the "cold side" of the heat tube 10" is located in the upper area of the washing container 2".

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram showing another embodiment of the dishwasher 1'" according to the invention. The dishwasher 1'" also has a horizontally arranged heat tube 10'" where the air circulation runs from bottom to top however. Thus the pipe 5" to the "cold side" of the heat

tube 10" is located in the upper area of the washing container 2".

The method described hereinafter is basically the same in all the exemplary embodiments shown.

It is known that a dishwasher 1, 1', 1", 1'" has a washing method whose programme run consists of at least one partial programme step "pre-wash", a partial programme step "clean", at least one partial programme step "intermediate rinse", a partial programme step "clear rinse" and a partial program step "dry". According to the invention and in the exemplary embodiments explained, during the "dry" partial programme step air from the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" is passed through the conduit system 4, 4', 4", 2'$ and back into the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'". The fan 9, 9', 9", 9'" is switched on for this purpose. The air path is indicated by the arrows A, B and C. On the "cold side" 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" a large amount of thermal energy is removed from the air passed by the fan 9, 9', 9", 9'" via the pipe 5, 5', 5", 5'" to one end 11, 11', 11", 11'", to the "cold side" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" so that this is very severely cooled and since the cold air has a substantially lower moisture absorption capacity, a large fraction of the moisture condenses. Heat conducting fins 13, 13', 13", 13'" are provided for good heat conduction of the air to the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'". The heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" passes the heat removed from the moist air (sensible heat) and the heat produced by the condensation (latent heat) to its other end 12, 12', 12", 12'", the "warm side" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'". The now very dry air passes via the pipe 6, 6', 6", 6'" from one end 11, 11', 11", 11'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to the other end 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" and is heated there. Heat conducting fins 14,

14', 14", 14'" are provided for good heat conduction from the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to the air. The now heated and very dry is now passed via the pipe 7, 7', 7", 7'" from the other end 12, 12', 12", 12'" of the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'" to the inlet 8, 8', 8", 8'" of the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" and thus back into the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'". The heated air introduced into the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" is now substantially drier and has a high absorption capacity for moisture. It rises upwards in the washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" and absorbs the residual moisture on the objects to be washed. As has already been described above, it is now fed back to the heat tube 10, 10', 10", 10'".

As a result of using a hast tube 10, 10', 10", 10'", the items to be treated only require substantially less heating compared with the prior art, in the exemplary embodiments described only by about 50°C or even less in the "clear rinse" partial programme step. This means a substantial saving of energy. As a result of heating the air, its moisture absorption capacity is increased again on each passage through the conduit system 4, 4', 4", 4'" which results in an improved drying result and/or shortening of the drying time.

The present invention provides a dishwasher 1, 1', 1".1'" which can be used to efficiently clean and dry objects to be washed in a washing container 2, 2', 2", 2'" and to keep the associated energy expenditure as low as possible.